

Monte Hendricks
P.O. Box 1197
Pollock Pines, CA 95726

5 April 2010

Vickie Sanders
County of El Dorado Chief Administrative Office
300 Fair Lane
Placerville 95667

RE: Rubicon Trail Restroom at Winter Camp

Vickie:

These are my comments regarding my opposition to the project and my recommendation that this OHV grant not be approved.

As you know, I have been a member of the El Dorado County Rubicon Oversight Committee since 2003 and am very well acquainted with Rubicon Trail issues.

I am surprised and confused that El Dorado County has applied for a grant regarding anything having to do with sanitation in regards to the Rubicon Trail based on Steve Kooyman's, El Dorado County Department of Transportation, statement before the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on 26 Jan. 2010. Mr. Kooyman stated that that County was deferring and delegating all sanitation issues on the Rubicon Trail to the Eldorado National Forest. Here is his statement:

"The County is kind of using a 4 S kind of principle to assist in evaluating each of the options. The fifth S was added later and really is the dollar sign. Three of the S's are in the Cleanup and Abatement Order, sedimentation, spill, and sanitation. For the purposes of this exercise the DOT is going to stay with four of the five S's and we're going to take out the second S which is sanitation and we are going to defer and actually rather have that be delegated to the Forest Service unless people decide to do their business on the trail, then the DOT probably has to take care of that. But, if it is off the trail we are going to stay within our boundaries relative to the trail."

This grant request is not in line with County Department of Transportation stated policy.

Placing a toilet in this location will create a campground. This site has never been studied for its appropriateness as a camping site. Because it has been used in the past does not identify the site as appropriate for camping. This site is a "soil island" in glaciated granite. It is a meadow area and served as a "water bank" for retaining moisture to support the plant life that flourishes in similar nearby locations. This site has been severely impacted by motorized use as evidenced by the incisement of the trail into the soil that has lowered the water table and is causing the death of the trees along the route. There has been indiscriminate off trail vehicle use driving over and killing most all the vegetation in the area. This fragile area, and similar impacted areas along the Trail, needs to be restored and protected. Any proposed camping areas need to be on areas of hard granite, not meadow soils.

El Dorado National Forest has a grant application submitted requesting funding for studying dispersed camping areas along the Rubicon Trail. I support that grant and this study must be completed before any restrooms or campground development is done on the Trail. Asking for funding and placement of this restroom on the Trail is premature. Also, the County and the Eldorado National Forest are required by the Cleanup & Abatement Order issued by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to have a long term management plan in place for the Rubicon Trail by April 2011. Any further restroom,

campground, or other facility additions or improvements must be part of a cohesive and approved upon plan. A plan that assures all NEPA/CEQA guidelines and requirements have been fully met.

This area is designated as "semi-primitive motorized" in the current Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Placement of a campground in this area would require an amendment to this plan. As stated previously, placement of a restroom will create a campground. The current process of the Eldorado National Forest granting the County a Special Use Permit for placement of facilities such as this restroom and claiming "categorical exclusion" from the NEPA process because the area is less than three acres is ignoring the vast cumulative effects continued motorized use on the Rubicon Trail are having on the environment. These activities and agreements between the County and USFS appear to be a work around an appropriate NEPA/CEQA process. Case in point – in early 2008 the Eldorado National Forest put out a scoping notice for placement of a restroom at the Ellis Tie Trailhead in preparation for an environmental assessment. The only letters received by the Forest requested that this be put on hold until the pending Rubicon Trail Master Plan (and all required NEPA/CEQA completed) was adopted. The Forest did not receive a single letter of support. The Forest then decided to use the special use permit approach and claim categorical exclusion.

This piecemeal approach is detrimental to the long term future of the Rubicon Trail.

For years past the County has used OHV grant funds to hand out and distribute WAG bags free to trail users. The WAG bag approach is simpler, cheaper, promotes individual responsibility, and does not require future costly restroom placement and waste removal. I am concerned that there has never been effective monitoring of use of these free WAG bags. Before more restrooms are even considered the next steps in regard to sanitation needs to be an ordinance requiring carrying and use of WAG bags on the Rubicon Trail and monitoring and enforcement with fines for noncompliance.

In summary, this grant request is not in line with DOT stated policy, the site is never been studied for its appropriateness for a camping area, creation of a campground here is not in line with the Forest Plan, further plans for additional facilities and improvements must wait until appropriate planning has been completed along with required NEPA/CEQA, and the effectiveness of the simpler WAG bag approach OHV grants have been funding for years has not been appropriately monitored or required.

Respectfully submitted,



Monte Hendricks

cc.

Diane Rubiaco, District Ranger
Pacific Ranger Station
7887 Highway 50
Pollock Pines, CA 95726

Edward L. Knapp
Chief Assistant County Counsel
El Dorado County
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

Ron Briggs, District 4 Supervisor
El Dorado County
330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

Ramiro Villalvazo, Supervisor
Eldorado National Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667

Wendy Wyels
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
11020 Sun Center Drive Suite 200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6114